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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION, TERRORISM, ELECTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, SOVEREIGNTY; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution, Terrorism, Elections, Political Parties and Sovereignty, were the major editorial themes of the daily newspapers on October 2, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES  
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[1A.](#) "Is Silence Helpful?"  
(Al-Bayyan, pro-coalition and affiliated with the Islamic Al-Dawa party led by Al-Ja'afari, published this page-five editorial by Salim Rasoul)

"The latest statistics report that among Shiites alone 10,000 martyrs have been killed (women, men, and children) who have nothing to do with politics or political activity. They were assassinated simply because they are Shiite. Can you imagine 10,000 people killed by terrorists solely due to their religious identity and sect! Despite this large number of Iraqi victims we haven't yet seen an honorable stance taken by many political and religious institutions--it's as if they condone these crimes which weren't perpetrated only against Shiites but also against Sunnis in Ramadi, Mosul, and Tikrit.

"Silence today will make Iraqis an easy target for Al-Zarqawi. So with all this bloodshed we wonder if the silence is helpful. May we ask others about their real positions toward who is killing our people? Let Al-Zarqawi and whoever covers for him know that we are able to defeat them--we stood against the tyrant himself and his regime (since 1968) and defeated them in the end. Were it not for our allegiance to our religious authority's wise instructions not to intervene [i.e. refrain from fighting back and provoke a civil war] then Al-Zarqawi would realize who he is fighting and what kind of fierce warriors he is threatening."

[1B.](#) "The Saudi Minister's Statements"  
(As-Sabah Al-Jadeed, independent, pro-coalition, published this front-page editorial by Ismael Zair)

"The results and sequence of the Saudi foreign minister's statements toward Iraq have raised many questions concerning Iraqi issues. Chief among them is the question of how to deal with Iraq as a sovereign state, that's a question that's been posed a thousand times by others. Perhaps the most important question of all of is this: Hasn't Iraq suffered enough from regional and foreign interference? Has Iraq become an open field for regional powers to settle political scores?.

"We are not about to take a stand for or against the Saudi minister's statements here, especially given sectarian overtones, but his statement clearly applies to our question above about how Iraq has become a field for others to settle issues. People like Iraqis who are descendants of: an ancient civilization, dignity, culture, and political figures, will never allow anyone to speak on their behalf. Politicians such as the Saudi minister have brought us to the brink of sectarianism, aiming to start a civil war. Those who want to ignite fires inside Iraq in order to protect their own countries should realize that this fire will burn them first."

[1C.](#) "Yes to the Constitution"  
(Al-Dawa, affiliated with the Islamic Al-Dawa Party led by

Al-Ja'afari, published this page-five editorial by Rassem Qassem)

"When the Iraqi people challenged danger and terrorism and went to ballot boxes during the previous election [in January] they demonstrated that they are valiant and yearn for freedom and democracy.

"The previous election has led to the establishment of an elected National Assembly, which included all Iraqi sects, in addition to a national government which has achieved important successes such as the improvement of the security situation, discovery of corruption and embezzlement, and the drafting of a permanent Iraqi constitution. This constitution will be the basis for establishing a new Iraq. The 15th of October will be a decisive day in our history and advance us toward prosperity. Our participation in the referendum is a national duty at this sensitive period.

"We are heading for a new era of rebuilding and constructing new Iraqi human beings-resurrecting those who have suffered tyranny for decades. We will keep moving forward and never go backward because Iraq's destiny was dictated by honorable and elected hands. For this reason, all honest Iraqis must actively participate in the referendum in order to make the political and constitutional process successful. This can be done through education and consultation in order to explain to people the real meaning of the constitution. In this way, we will be able to put an end to terrorist groups and the former regime's loyalists. Let the 15th of October be the decisive day to distinguish between good and evil."

#### [D. "The Last Chance for Sunnis"](#)

(Al-Ittihad, affiliated with the PUK, published this page-five editorial by Faryad Rawanduzi)

"The referendum is approaching within less than two weeks. Though, the Sunnis still do not know how to react to the draft constitution; there are some Sunni groups that would reject the constitution even if they had written it themselves. Other Sunni groups yearn for the past and in particular they long for Saddam's regime. Those groups are not less radical than the aforementioned groups because they have demands that are impossible to implement. There is yet another group that opposes the constitution but is hesitant and tells others that it would accept the constitution after Sunni demands are accommodated.

"The Sunni demands that were submitted to the Kurdish leadership will not change the constitution. I do not think that the Kurds oppose learning Arabic because thousands of Kurds get information and have had education in Arabic. Although Arabic is a difficult language to learn, it is the more important language for Iraqi Kurds and it is the second language after Kurdish in Kurdistan. Yet, everybody should know that Arabic cannot be the first language for the Kurds because it will not replace their mother tongue. At the same time, we cannot discard it. I do not demand that Arabs learn Kurdish because this is up to them. But, I strongly demand every Kurdish citizen learn Arabic as an important language.

"Regarding Iraq's unity, it does not make any sense to make this concept a Sunni demand because it is mainly an Iraqi demand. Therefore, it is acceptable to address this concern in the constitution. The Sunnis have the right to have red lines but they must not forget that other people have red lines too. I think that the former regime's period is a red line that has no place in the constitution. This matter must be understood by everybody and not only political Sunnis. The Sunni's approval of the recent constitutional suggestions represents a last chance for them. Sunnis must preserve this chance because all indicators show that rejection will not be helpful. The constitution is about to be accepted by the majority of Iraqis with the approach of October 15."

#### [E. "Terrorism: The Case of Lebanon and Iraq"](#)

(Al-Fourat, independent, anti coalition, published this page-five editorial by Haitham Muzahem)

"There are international and Arab efforts to fight terrorism but these efforts are not sufficient, especially in the Arab and Islamic world. Most of these efforts are governmental while public opinion in Arab and Islamic countries is apathetic or at times sympathetic with terrorism. People in these countries sympathize with terrorists under the pretexts that these militants are mujahideen and resistance movements that fight the American occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Perhaps this is the main gap that makes terrorism difficult to fight. Terrorism must be rooted out and this means that we must put an end to its financial and material sources. International laws have stated eliminating terrorist funds and outlawed the sheltering of terrorists. In Iraq, terrorists announce their criminal operations shamelessly and this reminds us of the Israeli brazenness to conduct operations against the Palestinians. Terrorists in Iraq

either belong to bands of Saddam loyalists (and the Ba'ath Party) or they are affiliated with Islamic extremists. Those terrorists kill innocent Iraqis under the assumption they will go to heaven by killing Iraqi people because they collaborate with the occupation. On the other hand, in Lebanon, terrorists remain anonymous and we don't hear about any specific group claiming responsibility for conducting operations. The Lebanese Minister of the Interior has said the country is currently attempting to deal with ghosts.

"I think that such justification by the Lebanese government cannot be accepted. In fact, this shows that the Lebanese government is unable to stop bombings. However, it is very easy to criticize officials for being negligent. The reality is totally different and this is due to the complicated security and political situation in Lebanon. This country has suffered from a civil war and then Israeli and Syrian occupation. In the end, they've had security forces that have been infiltrated by regional and international countries for the past thirty years."

**F. "The Referendum Reflects a Difficult Choice"**  
Al-Dustoor, independent, published this front-page editorial by Bassem Al-Sheikh:

"The referendum is not a lottery as some politicians may think. In fact, it is a process that is based on satisfaction. In addition, we must take into consideration that this process is surrounded by difficult conditions such as the deterioration of the security situation and other challenges that affect the whole political process.

"The referendum will establish the main law for the future of Iraq and represents a transition from the stage of compulsory laws to the stage of elective laws. As a result, the referendum means that people will vote based on their education and awareness and not mere submissiveness; in fact, it represents freedom from the slavery of the dictatorship.

"This process is not as easy as some people think. Saying 'yes' or 'no' does not mean that this is the end of this process but rather it is the starting point to choose between construction and destruction. For this reason, Iraqis have a huge responsibility when they decide to vote in the referendum because their choice will decide the future of Iraq. Moreover, the Iraqi people must be wise and mindful when making their choice because this is the decision that will define their destiny."

**G. "The Kurds and the Upcoming Referendum"**  
Al-Taakhi, affiliated with the KDP led by Mas'oud Al Barazani, published this front-page editorial by Editor-in-Chief, Badirkhan Al-Sindi:

"The birth of the constitution has not been easy. In fact, it occurred only through long and elaborate discussions. In addition, it created many predictable, unanticipated, and contradictory viewpoints which afflicted the constitution drafting process. Actually, it represented a challenge to the Transitional National Assembly which was very careful to produce a draft constitution before giving responsibility to the Iraqi political leadership to resolve the conflicts.

"The Kurdish leadership played an essential role in finalizing the draft and readying it for the referendum despite the fact that it did not fulfill all Kurdish ambitions. But, at the same time, we believe that voting for the constitution is a national responsibility and the current draft constitution is the best for the current Iraqi situation. This is because the draft has not easily satisfied all Iraqi interest groups. Moreover, rejecting the constitution would give Iraq's enemies the chance to achieve their wicked goals. As a result, the Kurds may ask for a new constitution that does not follow the same altruistic manner; one where they would demand their full rights which should be secured in the Iraqi constitution.

"The attempts to encourage and foment negative attitudes concerning the constitution in order to reject it, in the upcoming referendum, will only benefit those who have wept over Saddam's removal. This is an undeniable fact that contradicts the ambitions of the Iraqi people who suffered from dictatorship and injustice for the last three decades. We hope that all Iraqis will understand the tension in the current situation. We wish they would understand the necessity to settle constitutional issues without adopting solutions that were included in the TAL [Transitional Administrative Law]. However, using the TAL is definitely legal but will lead to more delays. Consequently, this will affect the progress of the Iraqi people. We understand that constitutions are not solid objects and this means that they can be changed and developed over time. Modifying the constitution is not impossible, but rather the impossible thing is making progress in Iraq with the influence of those who insist on controlling people's fate, confiscating their

freedom, and preventing the establishment of democracy in Iraq."

SATTERFIELD